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**Study Concerning the Conflict Prevention within the Handball
Teams**

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Abstract

The handball teams are in fact small groups. The small group comprises a number of persons in interaction, regulated by individually recognized standards, aimed at achieving one or more purposes, goals, and the components are differentiated by roles, functions or tasks. After enumerating all the factors that determine the conflict arising and amplification, we concluded that many of the possible conflicts within the handball teams could be avoided. The purpose of this study is to identify one or more modalities to avoid or prevent conflicts.

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1. Introduction

Handball teams actually represent small groups. The small group reunites a number of persons in interaction relationships regulated by individually recognized norms, who aim at achieving one or more goals (common objectives) and who are differentiated according to their roles, functions or tasks.

Because of the existing differences among the team members, conflicts are inevitable. Their management or avoidance is the coach's responsibility, that is why he should know both the moments and the factors susceptible to determine the conflict arising.

Problem statement

Differences within the sports groups, as compared to other social groups, are related not only to the content, but also to the social norms and perceptions. Consequently, sports group communication will be focused on other aspects than those specific to non-sportive groups. Anyhow, the conflict is present, under a form or another, in the daily communication, it having a genesis that, if let to follow its natural course, reaches the apogee and leads to the group disintegration. (Dragnea, A. 2006)

Within the sports groups, conflicts are inevitable, they being determined by the following factors: differences related to the perception of group objectives; differences between the individual and group objectives;

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competitiveness within the group; educational differences; differences associated to the competitive experience; mass-media intervention; envy and coach's preferences for one athlete or another.

As to the conflict arising and solving, three essential moments can be delimited: problem identification, conflict solving and valorization of post-conflict acquisitions. The main factors involved in a conflict are:

organizational factors, group internal pressures, interpersonal relations, athletes' personality structure, reactions to challenges, affective factors and other situations. (Hantău, C. 2000)

Purpose of study

After enumerating all the factors that determine the conflict arising and amplification, we concluded that many of the possible conflicts within the handball teams could be avoided. The purpose of this study is to identify one or more modalities to avoid or prevent conflicts.

Methods

To conduct our research, we used two types of methods: research methods and work methods. As research methods, we used the sociometric questionnaire and the statistic analysis of the obtained results. As work methods, we used psychodrama and sociodrama.

Psychodrama is a therapeutic discipline which uses action methods, sociometry, role training, and group dynamics to facilitate constructive change in the lives of participants. Based on the theories and methodology of Jacob L. Moreno, M. D. (1889-1974), psychodrama can be found in mental health programs, business, and education.

Psychodrama is a method of psychotherapy in which clients are encouraged to continue and complete their actions through dramatization, role playing and dramatic self-presentation. Both verbal and non-verbal communications are utilized. A number of scenes are enacted, depicting, for example memories of specific happenings in the past, unfinished situations, inner dramas, fantasies, dreams, preparations for future risk-taking situations, or unrehearsed expressions of mental states in the here and now. These scenes either approximate real-life situations or are externalizations of inner mental processes. If required, other roles may be taken by group members or by inanimate objects. It is mostly used as a group work method, in which each person in the group can become a therapeutic agent for each other in the group.

Psychodrama's core function is the raising of spontaneity in an adequate and functional manner. It is through the raising of spontaneity that a system, whether an internal human system or an organizational system, can begin to become creative, life-filled and develop new solutions to old and tired problems or adequate solutions to new situations and concerns. A psychodrama is best conducted and produced by a person trained in the method or learning the method called a psychodrama director.

By closely approximating life situations in a structured environment, the participant is able to recreate and enact scenes in a way which allows both insight and an opportunity to practice new life skills. In psychodrama, the client (or protagonist) focuses on a specific situation to be enacted. Other members of the group act as auxiliaries, supporting the protagonist in his or her work, by taking the parts or roles of significant others in the scene. This encourages the group as a whole to partake in the therapeutic power of the drama. The trained director helps to recreate scenes which might otherwise not be possible. The psychodrama then becomes an opportunity to practice new and more appropriate behaviors, and evaluate its effectiveness within the supportive atmosphere of the group. Because the dimension of action is present, psychodrama is often empowering in a way that exceeds the more traditional verbal therapies.

Psychodrama seeks to use a person's creativity and spontaneity to reach his or her highest human potential. With its perspective on the social network in which an individual lives, it promotes mutual support and understanding. In explaining his work, Dr. Moreno stated psychodrama's goal: to make it possible for every person to take part in creating the structure of the universe which "cannot have less an objective than the whole of mankind."

There are several additional branches of psychodrama. Sociometry is the study and measure of social choices within a group. Sociometry helps to bring to the surface patterns of acceptance or rejection and fosters increased group cohesion. This surfacing of the value systems and norms for a group allows for restructuring that will lower conflicts and foster synergistic relationships. Sociometry has been used in schools and corporations as well as within the mental health field.

Sociodrama is a form of psychodrama that addresses the group's perceptions on social issues, being a method for exploring the conflicts and issues inherent in social roles. Rather than being the drama of a single protagonist, this is a process that allows the group as a whole to safely explore various perceptions. Members might address different problems such as interpersonal conflicts (especially in a sports team), and together arrive at understanding and innovative responses to these difficult issues.

A sociodrama is a dramatic play in which several individuals act out assigned roles for the purpose of studying and remedying problems in group or collective relationships.

Sociodrama is similar to psychodrama in that both utilize group dynamics, enactment, and psychodramatic methods. They differ in the focus of the problem being addressed. Psychodrama deals with the problems that an individual person (i.e., “the protagonist”) faces in dealing with real life situations. Those problems involve several levels—the general cultural milieu, the interactions of the social roles, and the particular forms those roles take in the real people involved. A person is a nexus of many roles and, more, in that process of coming together of many qualities, embodies a particular way he or she expresses each role and works out ways of integrating them. The problem is complexified by the fact that the individuals in the protagonist’s life are also particular people—not just roles—and so they play their roles in certain ways.

Some of the ways people play their role are consistent with how most people might expect that role to be played, but a fair amount of the interaction is also affected by idiosyncratic elements, certain qualities that express creativity, wisdom, foolishness, neurosis, quirks, and so forth.

Psychodrama addresses both the role conflicts and the individuality of the people playing out those issues. Sociodrama in contrast focuses on explicating the depth of complexity and conflicts at the level of the social roles involved.

Sociodrama acknowledges that it is worthwhile addressing these shifts, the issues associated with social roles in general. In certain situations it becomes worthwhile to examine the nature of various social roles and how they play out, how they interact with those in other social roles, or people from other cultures, and so forth.

Premises of the research

- the tested female athletes are representative for the category they perform in;
- they are cooperative, by participating in the team actions at 100% of their capacities;
- during the research period, the progress natural rate is maintained.

Hypothesis of the research

The cohesion and stability increase within the handball teams determines a significant diminution of the number of conflicts.

Finding and results

After administering the sociometric questionnaire, we calculated the following indices:

- density – it describes the density of relationships within the groups;
- cohesion – it describes the power of mutual attraction among players within the groups;
- stability – it describes what minimum part of the group should be removed in order to divide it into independent individuals;
- tension – it describes the value of players’ discontents for the affective relations within the groups.

After the initial testing, we calculated the following values for the described indices:

1. Group indices 1 (Sociometry test nr. 1)

Name	Description	Value
Density	The index describes the density of inner relations in the group.	0.67
Cohesion	The index describes the strength of mutual attraction of handball players in the group.	0.98

Stability	The index describes which minimal part of the group must be removed to divide the group to unrelated parts.	4.63
Tension	The index describes the value of dissatisfaction of handball players by emotional relations in the group.	0.36

The second testing was made 8 months later and, meanwhile, besides the specific technical-tactical training, athletes worked individually with the team's psychologist. The results in this second testing were:

2. Group indices 2 (Sociometry test nr.2)

Name	Description	Value
Density	The index describes the density of inner relations in the group.	0.67
Cohesion	The index describes the strength of mutual attraction of handball players in the group.	1.47
Stability	The index describes which minimal part of the group must be removed to divide the group to unrelated parts.	4.88
Tension	The index describes the value of dissatisfaction of handball players by emotional relations in the group.	0.27

Conclusions and recommendations

When the experiment was finished, we noticed an improvement of all the calculated indices, that is why we recommend the utilization of psychodrama and sociodrama as work methods in the female handball players' psychological training. Another effect of the improvement of relationships among players was the game efficiency increase.

Moreover, in order to prevent conflicts within the handball teams, we propose the following strategies:

1. athletes' focusing on objectives, their understanding and the compulsoriness to fulfill the training tasks – this can be done by a total transparency when drawing up the training schedule and the game plans;
2. to establish, in the beginning of the program and together with the athletes, each one's instruction tasks, final objectives, attributions and places (locker, equipment, competition number etc.);
3. to periodically change the work groups within the training sessions;
4. to use the winning or losing situations for the athletes' better motivation.

An essential condition for the conflict avoiding requires the coach to be a good moderator of the relations existing within the team. This supposes the following aspects:

1. each athlete must know very well his place within the team and must respect his status requirements;
2. athletes' involvement in proposing the training objectives;
3. settling the training rules in the beginning of the session;
4. preventing the colleagues' malicious interventions if an athlete repeatedly makes mistakes during the training;
5. each athlete must be encouraged to express his opinions, even if not favorable, provided that they are well argued.

The coach's contribution to conflict solving is crucial and, in this sense, he can act in two ways:

- the immediate, direct intervention - by using his authority to regain the group stability;
- the indirect intervention - by using the group as an intermediary and suggesting modalities to solve the conflict.

The second way is inefficient, it allows the conflict amplification and determines the creation of a suspicious atmosphere, as well as a diminution of the coach's authority.

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